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TAYLOR SWIFT DOES NOT EXIST (EXTENDED VERSION 2)

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GOSSE SELFIE, TAYLOR SWIFT

“She is bigger than Elvis, bigger than the Beatles, bigger than God. She has blasted herself on a jet of pure sugary Americana into every quiet crevice of global culture.” (Sam Kriss). Only when the imageless God was dead, he could waste himself in multiple images. Beyond the images, it was now possible to speak of visiotypes, images of the world that call up certain models that have a symbolic content for the consumer. Every simulation is now bigger as God. In the future, maybe everyone will have the pleasure of going out with Taylor Swift for fifteen minutes, but you will only meet her wrapped in cellophane. “When your number is called, you’ll go for a meal together, and she’ll be perfectly polite throughout, not icy, not even

distant, but you will know, on an instinctive level you will know that this creature is utterly asexual, alibidinal, a synthetic product made in a sterile fac.” (Sam Kriss) She is not that cruel woman, that Baudrillard mentioned, to whom a man has written a love letter and who then asks him: “Which part of me has seduced you the most?” He replies: “Your eyes”, whereupon he receives the eye that seduced him in a parcel. “What beauty and power lies in this challenge – compared to the platitude of the seducer. But also the diabolical nature of this woman, who even takes revenge on the desire to be seduced: insidiousness against insidiousness, an eye for an eye: never has a punishment taken such a brutal form as this unscrupulous gift. She loses an eye, he loses face.” No that's not the business of Taylor Swift. Her songs are about touching break-ups and sad ex-boyfriends. But when you fall in love with her, she will say “Nice to meet you.” A Sentence, for which she has the Copyright.

Taylor Swift is not stupid at all. She knows exactly that today's hyper-celebrities are all about the derivative. Capital in all forms is today about speculation and the derivative, and in this context the privileged status is not simply that of the owner, but of the owner of the asset with the perceived capacity for exponential growth in price. Swift knows, that the rates of the Young Girl is so high because her values begins low. That's why she proclaims to her female fans day after day, be yourself. Everyone now carries their own little scheme of life, their life expectancy and even a life contract in their pocket, and thus apparently has a social claim to a certain quality of life. To this, capital adds the imaginary delusion as a supplement, namely to be able to identify oneself completely with one's individual interests in life in order to make oneself the capitalist accountant of one's own life. However, imaginary power is not only inscribed in the subject as a form of the will to survive, but is realized as the economized hyper-reality principle, the most successful application of which consists of integrating work, which is financialized at best, into the design of life, which in turn is spelled out through work, which now has to be social and creative at the drop of a hat. The wages received in return for the work or the returns achieved must of course be spent again, which only releases another form of work in consumption. But even that may be an illusion. The manic love of consumer girl for Swift and the obsession with this woman does not only demonstrates a lack of desire but with every throwing out of some of her miserable money the consumer girl will realize that she will loose. At the end there is only confirmation of a reciprocity that the Immediacy style invites. “It's me!” Versions of affirmation call for the accumulation of likes on social media to university composition pedagogy, generating “I feel seen” mantras to industrial-scale self-help. It is a watered-down version of recognition, the final vector of liberalism that redirects struggles for power and resources into struggles for respect and identity.

The “talking about everything” that erupts like a thunderstorm over the mass audience is a special form of voracity and survives through permanent digression. It mutates into something ghostly. We find ourselves on a flat, horizontal terrain where once there were mountains. The third person, be it the traitor, the parasite or the messenger, has disappeared or merely expresses itself in the first person. But it is no longer possible to attribute anything at all to the millions of selfie facial expressions. The more techno is a modulation of machines, the more its consumers demand the selfie face called DJ. But for you to see the neo-pop star, he would have to dip his face in a liquidiser. At that moment, producer and consumer might forget to breathe, as if the air no longer needed them. There will be film footage not just of this ending, but of the end of everything, and we are already seeing it now, and its most

salient feature is its apparent inability to draw a conclusion. Perhaps at some point there will only be the footage and no one left to watch it, which is the joke of course; but the light version, which is the pop that absurdly demands the ever more, will always find its audience, because what is it but our own boredom in the face of the spectacle of this never-ending end.

Humanity is so bored with itself that it uses pop music like a soft drink to hear what it is doing, the mass of songs is gigantic, the yield boring, predictable, pathetic. Consumers give it the nod. It's like watching billions of metronomes, made more tedious, not less, by the knowledge that each one thinks it's alive. Consumers feed on Taylor Swift, Instagram and porn, like a deep-sea sponge feeding on the plankton of simulated sociality that swoops down from above. Their murderous agony is that they are secretly perfectly content. Imagine the true that has absorbed all the energy of the false: then you have the simulation. In it, the neo-pop stars blur like water in water that disappears. And the consumer builds a home with pop in the lift, adapts to reality and at the weekend is haunted by the discomfort of vagabonding as if by a missed opportunity. The end of the story is a visit to the club. The virtual music world is neurotic to the point of implosion.

The fate of the music consumer is to merge with his surroundings, real or virtual, to disappear without feeling it, to go on like this forever because boredom precedes life – boredom as the sounding shroud of a customised immortality. Consumers are the eschatology of the non-existence of death. We are monkeys who have put their prehensile tails to a new use: Without our fear of falling, there is no need for the tails to still cling to the world, instead they wrap themselves around our throats and kill us with music that is indistinguishable from what is not music anyway.

The condensation of the over-communicated social succumbs to the same fate as American sauces, in which the natural seasoning is filtered out and the taste is resynthesized in the form of artificial flavors and consistency-preserving, preservative additives. The social is filtered to find its synthesis in the superfluous abundance of the most diverse therapeutic sauces in which we swim around – an invisible programming that falls prey to pleasure as an inorganically cancerous sociosphere of contact, control, persuasion, opinion and point of view defense. The white pornographic hyperreality, whose density matrix is increasingly condensed by the obese structure of the feedback (until it bursts?), makes any thought of a meaning-bearing structure disappear. The market-oriented multiplication of taste and eating habits as a result of the multiplication of competing product offerings corresponds to the multiplication of opinion habits as a result of the multiplication of media offerings. Like Taylor Swift.

Ultimately, a mass of taste has emerged, which, with its contrasting and differential connections – think broken and chic – levels out the last class cultures both on screen and at mass events. In the best case, each participant in the mass becomes the taste policeman of the other, whereby the specificity of each taste (ordering of fantasies in between the private and the public, whereby the latter is structure-forming) remains recognized, and this is precisely what constitutes mass taste. However, this is no longer the taste of a social class or group, but taste is ultimately produced as a texture by serial and simulative mass production. On the one hand, luxury goods will eventually be available as a simulation at Aldi, on the other hand, junk food will sooner or later become a delicacy or at least simulate it. In the age of

simulation, the ecstasy of images and mass tourism, no elite can keep its taste completely exclusive and at the same time stage it publicly; rather, it is now almost the privilege of the masses to have taste attributed to them, for example in tourism. Today, the travel situation simulates Disneyland into totalitarianism, as in Venice, so that you return from the trip more kitschy than when you set off. The journey in mass tourism is a journey into kitsch. The tourist occupies beaches all over the world in order to celebrate a mixture of permanent drunkenness, orgy and children's birthday party, interrupted by the protestant-capitalist forms of doing nothing, such as solving crossword puzzles, writing postcards, buying souvenirs or relaxing. Thus, even on vacation, habit becomes the real pleasure. On the other hand, the elite still wants to accuse the masses of lacking taste because they ignore or are unaware of exclusive indulgence, but cannot avoid admitting that today, due to a lack of time and imagination, it may be necessary to draw one's taste inspiration from the ghettos of the subculture.

Listen to Eldrich Priest: "Our society is therefore not a digestive system—a contemplation complex—but "a channel through which sensations flow, in order to be eliminated without being digested" (110). Entertainment's diversion is the systematic bracketing of the hesitation that consciousness is, and this bracketing is how "sensation passes without obstacles" (110). Sensation of this sort, the free-flowing sort, is essentially pure "information"—or, more accurately, it is a sheer fluctuation in the force of existing that refuses to take expression in anything more elaborate than the experience of its own occurring. For this reason, Flusser contends that ours "is a society of [sensation] channels that are more primitive than worms: in worms there are digestive functions" (110). Where there is simply input and output—sensation as information—there is only swallowing and shitting: no memory, no digestion, no gathering up of awareness in a difference that makes a difference. A worm, because it has no apparatus for diversion, loses the purity of sensation to the bureaucracy of its living organism. For a worm, sensation enters into an advancing matrix of vital activity and tendencies, where it feeds into already-established circuits with more or less apparent functionality."

And as a symptom, a Taylor Swift is winning the race for the public's favour. Sam Kriss writes in a blog post:

"This is what sets Taylor Swift apart from all the other white girl pop stars in her cohort, the Katy Perrys and Miley Cyrus who were her equals a decade ago and who, who knows, might even still be alive somewhere: Unlike them, she never sexualised herself. The others very obediently did everything they could to make themselves desirable, assuming that desire was an unlimited resource: it's not. You will have noticed that Taylor Swift's fans are singularly incapable of explaining what they actually like about her. Except that she writes her own lyrics, that it's all so personal and relatable, that she's so much herself. But the rocks spinning silently in the room are themselves, too. This year, news outlets began reporting that people who had seen Taylor Swift's Eras tour live were coming down with a strange, localised amnesia: after the concert, they suddenly realised they couldn't remember certain things that had happened. Very scary! The BBC brought out a psychologist to explain that this amnesia is caused by too much overwhelming stimuli in too short a time for the brain to process it properly. This is obvious pop-psychology driven from a person who has no idea how a brain actually works. No: you don't remember any specific events of the concert because there

were no specific events.

I don't think the Incels can ever adequately describe their own state, because their state is a mask that obscures what it's really about. Likewise, I don't think a Swiftie can ever hope to adequately understand their idol. Taylor Swift is the formless crisis of the present and the void over which everything is spun."

Taylor Swift is the hyperreality of the influencer. She IS the look. Look in Baudrillard no longer inhales narcissism, but rather poses an offensive self-exhibition as a video image, a kind of egoism that brings all possible forms of individuality programs into play with its illustrated selfies, which not only identify the ego as a post-creative producer, but above all as an end consumer of social media. This could also be described as a self-optimizing existential and normalised striptease (not a sexual, erotic or a cute one). But that's not true either. She IS simulation as such. All energy of the false (phantasm and so on) is absorbed by her at once and disappears into the calm sea without leaving any bubbles behind. In a way you can only say what she is not. Not a phantasm, not a living currency, not the traditional star (Klossowski).¹ She is not a depressive human being, she is the Coke Zero of pop music. (Anthony Galluzzo)

Definitely it's like Freddie deBoer writes more a problem of the consumer than of Swift itself:

"She is one of the most richly rewarded and privileged people to ever walk the face of this planet, and the ambient attitude in our culture industry is that we should be ashamed that we haven't done more to exalt her. It is *madness*. And yet no one seems to want to point that madness out, I strongly suspect because they don't want to find themselves on the hitlist of those unfathomably passionate fans. But someone needs to point out that waiting in a line for five months to get concert tickets is not a charming human interest story, but rather a record of deranged and deeply unhealthy behavior. Putting a second mortgage on your house to buy concert tickets isn't a cute sign of devotion, it's evidence of a parasitic attachment that can only lead to long-term unhappiness. And I'm willing to guess that many other people feel the same way but are afraid to say so."

1) In a further step, according to Klossowski, the translation of the celebrity or the star (whom Klossowski calls an industrial slave) into living money can be understood in the same way as the Marxist transformation of gold into money, whereby gold as money is exclusively opposed to all other commodities, in that the commodities express their wealth in it; at the same time, the star must become a sign of general wealth, whereby it still remains part of the wage system. The next, decisive and at the same time conceivable step would now be for the star to know how to use the general excitement directed at it, which is expressed in solvent demand, to put itself in the place of money, more precisely to embody the general equivalent (money) itself, whereby the star would actually mutate into a living coin. But gold is useless in itself, it is the money that gives value to gold, that makes it valuable. So it is not surprising that Klossowski finally talks about money as a sign again. He writes: "As 'living money', the industrial slave is at once a sign guaranteeing wealth and this wealth itself. As a sign, she stands for all kinds of material riches, but as wealth she excludes all other demand, if it is not the demand she represents the satisfaction of"¹⁶ In contrast to the industrial slave, therefore, living money will directly claim the status of the sign, indeed it will directly embody the sign, and by doing so, living money not only embodies the sign of abstract wealth, but also

represents wealth itself with its body. However, as long as the star serves only to raise the price of any goods (sunglasses, shoes, television programmes, toothpaste, etc.), he remains what Klossowski calls an “industrial slave”. However, because the star remains the target of the masses’ desire, he still represents the unrivalled wealth and can thus, at least potentially, set himself up as living money. Money and star thus converge in pure semiotics (of money), the sign of an empty phantasm representing everything and nothing.

At the same time, both money and star represent value as a void, which here is to be understood as completely arbitrary/virtual. And this is also what Klossowski’s arbitrary/virtual value qua money in the book “The Living Coin” aims at, which is like a phantasm answering another phantasm. For Klossowski, the value-money phantasm is the better concept than the commodity fetish, both of which contain anything but subjective illusions, but are to be understood purely objectively, also in the sense of how the objects actually appear to the consumer, namely with a power/magic, i.e. endowed with phantasms that are not only based on responding to other phantasms, those of desire, but on disposing of this in all its opacity for the subject. And it is precisely this power that now exploits living money to take the place of dead money. And if prices are now largely detached from the value of goods qua abstract labour, as is the case today with branded goods, among others, and prices thus mutate purely as a result of the willingness of marketing- and advertising-seeking customers to pay, then it seems only logical to agree with Pierre Klossowski’s statement: “In the world of industrial production, it is no longer what seems to be free by nature that is attractive, but the price of what is naturally free.” Klossowski is not primarily alluding to the fact that consumers today are prepared to pay extremely high prices for the image or information value of a product, but rather to the fact that the price of body/lust/sex/emotion is rising, especially when not everyone has the means to rent a body for sexual intercourse.

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